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# LABOUR ORGANISER

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# SITUATIONS VACANT

**BRISTOL SOUTH-EAST C.L.P.** Applications are invited for the post of full-time Secretary/Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms may be obtained from The Secretary, Unity House, 326a Church Road, St. George, Bristol, 5, to whom they should be returned not later than the 20th February, 1951.

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# THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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## OURSELVES

WITH this volume the *Labour Organiser* enters its 32nd year of publication. In the first issue dated August, 1920, a leading article explained that the purpose of the journal was to satisfy the need for some medium for the exchange of ideas on organisation and for an open platform on which they might be discussed. For many years the *Labour Organiser* was the official organ of the National Union of Labour Agents and Organisers, but it never restricted itself to narrow trade union matters; throughout it has striven to fulfil the purpose described in its first editorial.

The change from Union ownership, which took place during the war, has only strengthened its original purpose. The *Labour Organiser* remains a journal for those especially concerned with electoral and organisational problems of the Labour Party and, as every issue bears witness, it gives a free platform for a discussion of these problems. Agents and other Party workers write articles based upon their personal experiences in the field: and most of these contributions are unsolicited.

Because of its specialist nature, it was never expected that the *Labour Organiser* would have a mass circulation, but with the extension of Labour activity to practically every town and village in Britain the army of Party *activists* has multiplied in recent years. A great increase in the circulation and influence of the *Labour Organiser* would be secured if regular readers made its existence known to their colleagues. There should not be a Local or Ward Labour Party Secretary, or a member of a local Executive Committee, who is not profiting from the advice and guidance the paper gives month by month. We urge our readers to make a special effort to increase the sale of the *Labour Organiser* during the present year.

# Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society

By Edwin Furness, B.A., Political Secretary

THE LABOUR PARTY is an electoral organisation for formulating socialist policy and contesting elections to further these aims. In contrast the Co-operative Party is the political department of the Co-operative Union, whose special job is to try to mobilise co-operative membership in the defence and extension of consumer controlled co-operative enterprise, as an efficient economic and social system. In the contesting of elections the Co-operative Party works through the electoral machinery of the Labour Party.

Our own Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society is proud of its dual position and affiliation to both the Labour Party and the Co-operative Party. The Political Purposes Committee of the R.A.C.S. established in 1921 is affiliated to the Labour Party nationally, London, Southern Region and to each constituency Labour Party throughout our trading area. In addition, since 1930 we have been affiliated to the Co-operative Party. This dual affiliation, in so far as our membership desires, enables us to play a part in the formulation of policy at national and local levels in both the Co-operative and Labour Parties.

## Politics and Trade

In 1922 when a political fund was established the membership was 95,818 with annual sales of £2,861,063, which by 1950 had grown to a membership of 341,617 and annual sales of 19 million pounds sterling. In 1924, 2,405 members out of 100,565 members objected to the allocation of 6d. from the trading surplus to political work on their behalf. In 1950, with a largely increased membership, less than 1,000 members objected out of a total membership of 341,617. The resources for political work have increased from £1,137 in 1922 to the amount of £8,515 19s. 3d. in 1950.

The Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society for thirty years has been active in political work, with four main objects: (1) To make the most effective use of the political power of the Society, using the resources both of the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party; (2) To secure representation in Parliament and on local

Government Authorities; (3) To assist in the building up of strong local Labour Parties for the carrying out of electoral organisation and work throughout the R.A.C.S. area; and (4) To set an example to other societies and so lead to the building up of a great united political movement to represent the modern trinity—the Trade Union, the Co-operative and Socialist Movements.

An understanding has long since been reached at national level between the leaders of the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party as to the special place occupied by the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, Limited, in political matters, with its interests in both parties determined by a method of dual affiliation.

## Agreements

It may be regretted, that the example set for direct society affiliation by the R.A.C.S. has not been copied throughout the Co-operative Movement. Such regrets, must be tempered by an awareness of the increasing affiliation of Co-operative Party bodies, both to constituency and regional Labour Party organisations. We should also recognise the very large measure of goodwill, understanding and agreement that exists at all levels between the Co-operative Movement (including the Co-operative Party) and the Labour Party.

Need we look further for example than the agreements between the Co-operative Union and the Labour Party reported to the 1946 Labour Party Conference at Bournemouth, and the warm reference to the Co-operative Movement in 'Labour and the New Society' adopted by the 1950 Labour Party Conference.

The Co-operative Party has a job of work to do on behalf of the Co-operative Movement. The Labour Party has a job of work to do on behalf of the workers trinity—the Trade Unionist, the Co-operator and the Socialist. The achievements of these past few years are a credit to all concerned. There is much yet to be done in consolidation and extension of our planned economic life in which the contribution of the Co-operative Movement with its emphasis on the consumer is of great importance.

# Turn on the Heat

By JACK CUTTER

THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES for Party organisers.

The ominous international situation, spreading gloom and foreboding like a Churchill speech, the hard winter with its frost, fog, snow, unheatable halls and draughty platforms, the coal crisis, the power cuts—all these circumstances conspire against political activity, and if we were not good and tough ourselves, we might be inclined to persuade ourselves that this is a good time to pursue a policy of masterly inaction and let things lie fallow until both the political and the aneroid barometers register higher temperatures.

## Special Endeavours

But don't let's kid ourselves. All political history in this country proves that the party which goes into a period of hibernation might live to regret it, but often doesn't.

This is just the time for special endeavour and if conditions are against us, they are a challenge to our ingenuity in devising ways and means of beating them.

It has been my good fortune, in the 50 days just before Christmas, to address 45 meetings in a belt about 100 miles wide and 50 deep, in cities, towns and villages, among miners, engineers, steel workers, land workers, office workers and their wives, in political and weather conditions which would stow a soot (which being freely translated into what passes for English, means they shouldn't happen to a dog).

Yet, they were good meetings, on the whole. Our own people came along in fair numbers because they wanted to be together in these grim times and to hear a colleague put the Party's case without ifs, buts, or unlesses and with faith and confidence in our own capacity to handle whatever might lie ahead better than the array of flat tyres, who are our political opponents.

That gives us lesson No. 1. When sending out invitations to meetings, abandon the stereotyped form of invitation or summons. Make it a personal thing, saying, in effect, 'Let's get together in these times. We want your company and

the country needs our confidence and leadership'. That sort of thing will bring along the best of them.

Lesson No. 2, learned from my arctic tour is that the normal meeting room or hall, if it is badly heated, should be abandoned in this weather. Seek and find a warm place, no matter how difficult it seems. And when you have found one, tell the members what you have done and why you have done it. I struck one hall in my round which would have frozen an Eskimo audience had we used it. On exploring the premises we discovered the boiler room, which was a fair size with a comforting temperature in the eighties, almost as warm as my probable post-mortem destination. We shooed the audience down there, and though it was a tight squeeze and they sizzled a bit, they enjoyed it and were in good fettle.

The next lesson is not very new and might be applied at other seasons, but it was certainly successful in my recent experience. Some parties within my orbit lay on tea and cakes at all meetings, business or public, and charge 6d. or 1s. for a hand-round during the meeting. The audience could take it or leave it if they wished, but I never once saw anyone refuse and all were grateful for the hot tea on a cold night. The meeting notices stated that this service would be available and it brought good attendances and produced a friendly atmosphere without interrupting the proceedings or disturbing the speaker.

## Keep the Ball Rolling

But the important thing is to keep activity going, refusing to give a clear field to all these unscrupulous opportunists who try to blame the Labour Government for every snell wind that blows. After all, if the Tories had won last February, what an unholy mess they would have made in the present set of circumstances! Why shouldn't we point this out and say what a good job it is that a Labour Government is handling things.

Why not organise a special reunion celebration of the first anniversary of our victory last February? Have a bash at any and every kind of activity during these tough months and it will pay good dividends later on.

# Examine Your Poll-Day 'System'

Says REG UNDERHILL, West Midlands Regional Organiser

THE ASSISTANT NATIONAL AGENT in his notes on recent by-elections (*Labour Organiser*, December) rightly deals with the new technique being practised by the Tories. While we must match such techniques, and surpass them, in the scientific organisation of elections, let us not overlook the vital necessity of making our campaigns lively, bringing virility and sparkle to the election. Such sparkle, of course, sometimes depends on national factors as well as what Election Agents can achieve. Should we not start, therefore, to take stock of our system of conducting elections, particularly from the aspect of polling day procedure?

## Handsworth and Oxford

Let us consider the Handsworth and Oxford by-elections. Most canvassing at Oxford was done during the daytime, thanks to splendid help given by comrades from distant areas, yet only 62 per cent or 41,000 of a 69,000 electorate were reached. The Agent, however, had his February records to supplement this by-election canvass.

Handsworth did little daytime canvassing, most was accomplished in the evenings and at week-ends. Again 41,000 electors were canvassed, representing 72 per cent on a smaller electorate of 57,000, but Handsworth suffered from having no records whatever of the February General Election.

In both campaigns there were thus reasonable, though incomplete, records for polling day. Both had fairly good polling day machinery with all committee rooms (these were adequate in number) and practically all polling stations well manned. But whilst Handsworth was flooded with "knockers-up" in the vital stages, Oxford discovered they were at a premium. Just what is the use of conducting comprehensive committee room procedure on polling day if more workers are tied to committee rooms than are actually knocking up?

At Handsworth another and possibly more serious problem was evident, typical of Birmingham and undoubtedly of a number of other areas. There are good, compact polling districts, varying from 600 to 900 electors. This makes planned

canvassing much easier and Handsworth tackled that splendidly, but what a problem it presents on polling day!

Instead of having polling stations with a single polling district in each, the majority have more than one and some up to five, and in some instances all electors use one door. When it is remembered that every polling district starts numbering electors from 1, the hopeless confusion which results will be apparent.

The answer is not merely more efficient checkers, for even the most able adult would find himself unable to cope with the position, particularly in rush periods. This means committee room staff cannot rely on the accuracy of numbers brought in. They continue to spend time marking wall charts and pulling out promise cards, but with little confidence in what they are doing, and rightly so.

Such problems are more common than some people will admit. Are we then to continue following a mere conservative approach to our election organisation, doing things because they are in the handbook and have been done for years? Canvass records, checkers, wall charts and promise cards achieve what we want—that of recording electors who have polled and enabling us to go after the others, but this is provided we can be sure of the accuracy of numbers we are obtaining if our system is efficient, and if there are sufficient workers to knock up the unpolled electors.

A talk with the R.O. to deal with the polling station problem might bring results. I say *might*. The training of electors to always bring their poll cards *might* also have the desired effect. If a constituency is properly organised we should never be faced with a shortage of workers on polling day, yet in all too many this is the case.

If we are faced with the "Oxford problem" on polling day what alternative is there but to clear all committee rooms, say at 6.30 p.m., with the exception of the officer-in-charge?

Over and above these things, is not the time ripe to take a complete look at our polling day procedure. Can we put all preconceived ideas and traditions on one

side and look clearly at things? This may not apply to those constituencies which over a period of years have built up a local system and a sound organisation with sufficient workers which never fails, but will it not be agreed that these are in a complete minority?

All sorts of systems have been suggested but most of them have defects here and there, and in far too many constituencies the so-called 'system' is merely a hotch-potch. Could we not have a "Technical Committee" to get down to discovering if a simple system can be devised which, with minor local adaptations, might be used everywhere with accuracy and a minimum of inside staff?

There is even the revolutionary proposal put forward in some quarters that in future committee rooms shall only be report posts for workers and records, and that street captains should be armed with the canvass records and should keep the tally of electors voting, and carry out the control of the knocking-up until the poll closes.

It is certainly significant that in Handsworth, particularly, at many polling stations there were no Tory checkers, and yet they were able to get out their vote.

#### Election Training

In my view there must be an intensification of our election training within the various constituencies, but I wonder how much of that already accomplished becomes somewhat theoretical on polling day. How many "systems" are applied because it is the thing to do with but little regard for what we really want to achieve? Regarding Len Williams' stress for the marked register, it should also be emphasised that not only is this an essential towards securing an efficient election campaign, but if records of all electors can be secured it means that between campaigns we can devote special attention, particularly with literature and canvassing, to the doubtfuls. This means we can really plan our Party's work.

One wonders sometimes just what our Parties can be doing, if they do not conduct a planned canvass for this marked register and for membership, and have no systematic literature distribution. Surely it means that in many cases our active people are just getting bogged down in interminable committees!

## After 25 Years

After 25 years as Labour Party Agent for Ilford, 75-year-old Alderman Dick Holness has resigned.

In handing over a presentation from the Eastern Regional Council Mr. R. T. Windle, the National Agent, described Dick as the 'ideal Agent' possessing all those qualities of initiative, understanding and ability so necessary in the full-time Agent. Such qualities have been his over a lifetime devoted to the Movement and his is now the proud record of being the only serving full-time Agent with fifty years' membership of the Party.

Born in West Ham, and brought up in a Tory home, he was taking an interest in politics even before he left school at the age of 13.

In 1895 he joined the I.L.P.—missing, by nine months, becoming a founder-member. When not at his job as a cost accountant, he spoke at frequent I.L.P. meetings and then, in 1914, he volunteered for the Army.

Afterwards he volunteered for service with the Guild of Builders (an experiment in guild socialism in the building industry) as Cost Accountant. He joined the Guild Service in 1921 and succeeded the late Malcolm Sparks as Secretary, holding this post until the Guild went into liquidation.

When Dick was talked into becoming an Agent in 1924 by Mr. James Ranger, South Ilford M.P. from 1945-50, there were 81 acknowledged members of the Labour Party on the 1s. a year subscription in Ilford. Now, there are more than 6,000.

Shortly after his appointment came the General Election of 1924 and on that occasion the Labour vote increased from 5,700 to 8,460.

In 1945 the Ilford Constituency was split into North and South and Dick took over Ilford South where the membership to-day is over 3,600.

To all new Agents entering the service and to those with only four or five years' experience, Dick Holness stands out as an example of that devotion and steadfastness which has built the Labour Party and which it is now our duty to carry on.

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# ‘Surrey County Clarion’ reaches 10,000

By R. PRINGLE

**I**N DECEMBER 1950 the *Surrey County Clarion* completed its fourth year of publication, having stepped-up circulation from 4,000 copies in our first issue to 10,000 to-day.

Our success is purely relative, however. Undoubtedly an increase from 4,000 to 10,000 in four years is gratifying, but if the area in which we operate, the County of Surrey, with a population of over one million is considered, it will be seen that we have a long way to go before feeling any sort of satisfaction.

It was in the Epsom Council Chamber (kindly lent for the occasion by the local council) in the autumn of 1946 that the Surrey Federation of Labour Parties decided to launch a monthly Labour paper.

## No Journalists

An editorial committee, whose duties included the managerial, was elected. None of those elected was a journalist and on the strength of having been a proof reader on a daily paper for many years the editor's chair became mine. It was laid down by the Federation that our main concern should be publicising the Surrey County Council, with the object of demonstrating the necessity of increasing Labour strength on that body.

At the outset it was agreed that the paper must be treated as a business, that it must pay its way. The decision to begin with a circulation of 4,000 was accepted with the proviso that that figure would be increased incessantly. There must be a continuous forward movement; stagnation would have meant defeat; if obstacles could not be overcome they must be got round somehow.

After two years we reached 5,000—then stuck. That was why we started local editions. We asked Divisional Parties to take the front page for their own news, promising at the same time to take 1,000 copies each month.

Our very energetic Business Manager went round the county addressing General Committees, until now we have six local editions: (1) Carshalton and Banstead; (2) Caterham and Purley; (3) Guildford; (4) Dorking; (5) Reigate; (6) Wimbledon. As there are nineteen parliamentary divisions in the county we still have a long way to go.

By adopting the local edition system we found that 1,000 copies were saleable in places where previously only 300-400 copies were sold. Divisional Parties were very loth to take up a local edition, afraid that their active members were already overloaded with work. Once started, however, they found that local enthusiasm made the grade, and several parties are now ordering hundreds over their 1,000 quota.

As regards the editorial work we get great assistance from *Labour Press Service*, the *Daily Herald* and the *T.U.C. Industrial News*, who supply us regularly each month with news, articles, half-tone and block cartoons. The Regional Hospital Board, the National Health Executive Council for Surrey, the County Education Committee and the Town and Country Planning Committee all send valuable editorial material.

What I can only describe as a huge amount of propaganda, much of which is never used, is also sent us from the U.S.A. (*Labour News*), from the Hungarians, the Buchmanites, The League for Cruel Sports, etc., etc., to say nothing of a huge Labour paper plastered with photographs of Franco (written entirely in Spanish) from Madrid. This mass of material which we receive is a godsend for the local ‘Save Paper’ movement.

Our policy is to sell the paper wholesale in quires of 27 copies to any organisation, newsagent or individual. Our price is 3s. a quire, which gives a profit to the seller of 1s. 6d. per 27 copies.

## Advertisements

We also accept advertisements, both prepaid “smalls” and display, with not a great deal of success, it must be admitted, caused mainly by our not having a central office. Our best advertisers are trade unions whose motives for advertising must be considered as altruistic inasmuch as they cannot hope to gain any benefit, in the true sense of the word, from their announcements.

The people really responsible for our limited success are the men and women who sell the paper from door to door regularly each month. They are the people whom we always have in mind when preparing the paper, doing our best to give them something worth selling.

# Party Education

By SAM JARDINE, PAISLEY L.P.

IT SHOULD BE the earnest wish of every member of the Labour Party that it shall continue to make progress, increase in numerical strength and that its rank-and-file continually acquire greater knowledge of the ways and principles of Socialism. In this connection Ward and Local Parties have important work to do.

The aim of all parties should be not only to secure additional membership but to provide instruction for members in the things for which Labour stands and in which we believe. This work of instructing members, particularly new members, is one of vital import and consequently should not be lightly undertaken by anyone.

## Equipped In Labour's Teaching

If we liken the new member to a young child requiring essential nourishment in order to grow and become strong, then particular care is required in the choice of those who engage in this work. There is nothing worse than stunted growth. Members must be fitted completely and thoroughly equipped in Labour's teaching. It is no easy task which confronts us to-day in propagating Socialism and living as true Socialists.

Accepting that there is an urgent and clamant need for proper instruction the question arises as to the best method by which it may be imparted.

Recently, with a class under my care on the subject of Scottish Local Government, I have been experimenting in various methods of instruction and have decided that the 'question and answer' method is most efficient. Such a method of teaching might be termed 'catechistical'.

With my class I use forty minutes of a ninety minute session on questions and answers based on the previous lesson. Under this method I have watched the process of instilling and inculcation in operation. I have noticed particularly that when a member of the class failed to answer a question and the answer was given correctly by another, the former pupil was so forcefully impressed that on no future occasion, when put to the test, did he fail to come up correctly.

Regarding the meetings of ward and local parties. Most get through their ordinary business quickly enough and I would like to suggest, provided of course that no other arrangements have been made, that an ordinary business meeting should be followed by perhaps half an hour's instruction.

A suitable person might read from one of our many publications, emphasising the salient points, interpreting and interrogating freely.

I feel certain, that in the homely, friendly atmosphere which abounds at such meetings, local parties who adopt this suggestion would soon find themselves equipped with a membership one hundred per cent informed.

There is nothing difficult about this method of instruction which I advocate. A little time and thought quickly produced questions and a grasp of the proper way in which to frame them.

Incidentally, members trained to ask questions amid the friendliness of their own meetings would quickly lose that self-consciousness which prevents people from asking questions at public meetings. People so trained and confident would be invaluable assets to any party during an election campaign.

## Questions

For party meetings, avoid leading questions which can be answered with a straightforward 'yes' or 'no'. Questions should be so framed as to stimulate and provoke thought in order to ensure a worthwhile impromptu answer. Questions should also be simple, enabling the least intelligent among us to understand and the more intelligent to appreciate.

The rewards which accrue from this method are of considerable value. Apart from enriching the mind we are also providing information and shedding light.

Looking around I am tempted to ask this question: 'Is there a dearth of instructors among us, or is it apathy which has overtaken us?' If you have the gift to instruct, and like most other gifts, it can be acquired, then get on with the job.

**Most Agents in Parliamentary Elections** must now keep a weather eye on the legal maximum, while in Municipal contests we are still too often compelled to work on a shoe string. In the first case the problem is to avoid going over the top and in the second to stretch available resources achieving the maximum effect in both.

It is dangerous to restrict the scope of a campaign when it should be reaching its climax because one does not know what you have already spent. Knowledge is power and it would be exasperating indeed to be narrowly defeated when the expenditure of a few more pounds on propaganda, or Polling Day organisation, might have made all the difference.

First of all—Budget! It is amazing how many people have not yet grasped this essential. In fact Parties would do well to have a quarterly budget for normal activities. Make your budget, be sure it is adequate and then stick to it. Trying to run things 'on the cheap' can be expensive in the long run.

**£      s.      d.**

Where money is not too tight the starting point will be the legal maximum, in which case you must be careful to reckon all subsidised matter at full price and take into account anything obtained free. In other cases you may start with an estimate of the money likely to be available or the average spent in previous years.

You will find there are some 'fixed' expenses which will not vary much, no matter how limited the contest, while other expenses will fluctuate according to the nature and scope of the campaign. With a little practice it is easy to make a flexible budget which will cover any reasonable combination of circumstances.

There is no such thing as a ready-made budget. It must be tailored to suit the constituency, a little longer on the organisational arm, a little off the propaganda leg according to the character of the particular area.

It is helpful to examine the accounts for previous campaigns to see where savings can be made, and, equally important, where expenditure can be increased with advantage. Such an examination is especially useful for Municipal Elections which take place fairly frequently and where variations due to price factor are not so violent.

# BUDGET VICTORY

In this, the first of a new series, Mr. J. A. Dunbartonshire, discusses the Budget. In future articles he will

In making comparisons, set out the figures in columns for at least three years back, then put your estimate and leave another column for the actual figure to be filled in afterwards. Even incomplete accounts will show some definite trend when set out in this way.

Now for another accountant's tip. Reverse the usual practice. Put the total first, followed by sub-totals with relevant detail under each. Get used to thinking in overall figures. The fact that a thousand leaflets cost more or less is certainly interesting and the reason will be considered when placing future orders, but at this stage we are mainly concerned with whether a greater expenditure on printed matter as a whole had a greater effect, or whether more money spent on organisation would be better. As a rule parties spend too little on organisation, and, between elections, too little on capital equipment.

Examination of previous accounts will show many items which can be obtained gratis by prior thought and arrangement, and also many things which were bought or hired during the stress of the campaign but which could be 'mocked up' if materials are available; i.e. strawboard for posters is becoming more and more expensive to buy but can be accumulated over a period if you establish good relations with local shopkeepers.

**£      s.      d.**

Analysing wastes can be illuminating. The first question to ask is 'Did we need to do it at all?' or 'Was it merely done because the other fellow does it?' Witness

# G FOR ORY

HN M. SMITH, Agent, West  
of organisational expenditure.  
n Printing and Advertising.

the mammoth sixteen-sheet poster displays and elaborate press advertising into which some Agents were tempted because the Tories had ample money and not enough voluntary labour to use it more effectively. Or the local issues which were pursued at great cost and which did not really matter at all. We must also look askance at any expenditure used simply in answering our opponents instead of putting forward our own positive policy.

Those leaflets which are still piled in the corner. Did you order the wrong quantity, or did the distribution machinery break down? If so, it might be better next time to spend more on ensuring that the material does reach those for whom it was designed. Or perhaps they were the wrong kind, hastily drawn up and run off without a proof to save time. Oh yes, it has happened, many times.

**£ s. d.**

The wrong size of literature is not so serious perhaps but it wastes time which, of course, is also money. If your printed matter has to go into an envelope give the printer the final size and, therefore insure the minimum of folding.

Did you get caught up in overtime rates through rush work? A little prior thought might avoid this. There is seldom anything which cannot be prepared in advance, at least in draft. Look quite candidly and ruthlessly at some of your own last-minute leaflets. Perhaps you feel a little twinge of conscience about them now.

Did anything cost more than you anticipated, through having no contract? A

written agreement for all premises used as Committee Rooms and a firm quotation for all materials supplied will obviate this.

Did you have to pay extra for late advertisements or did you have a heavy telegram and telephone bill when a few form letters duplicated in advance and sent out in good time would have done the job for a penny stamp? Small points, perhaps, but they all add up.

Bulk buying is the thing for stationery, but not a greater bulk than you really need. Supply your Sub-Agents with the materials they will require and cut their spending power to the minimum.

A little earlier I said time is money. It is worth while spending money to save time, especially on Polling Day. We have a saying 'Every minute means a vote'. Therefore it is worth spending an hour during the campaign to save a minute on Polling Day, and an entire evening now to save an hour during the campaign.

**£ s. d.**

Of course the outlay of money will be conditioned by available manpower, about which I have not space to say much, only this. In any constituency, a competent shorthand-typist is essential. This should be your first commitment when an election is imminent thus freeing you from detail, to get on with the major task of directing operations according to your pre-arranged plan.

So sum up. Make your budget now. The printer will readily give you provisional estimates and you can set aside a reserve to cover any increase in prices. This will mean roughing out the Election Address and some of the other main items now. Examine critically past campaigns to see where you can improve and you will find yourself planning your next contest in a more detailed way than ever before.

Finally, you will find that a budget is more than a planning instrument. It is an instrument of control. When faced with importunate demands to do this or that, you need not argue, but point out that it can only be done by skimping something else. Knowing there is a budget and that everything possible is being done within the limits allowed, you and your Sub-Agents will be free to concentrate on getting the most out of the voluntary labour which is usually available in abundance during elections and which should be intelligently used, leaving no one with the feeling that their time is being wasted.

# Canvassing with Confidence

By CHARLETON PRIOR, Agent, Exeter L.P.

WE MUST ALL AGREE that the most vital part of the election machine is an efficiently marked register, combined with up-to-date records of Postal Voters, Proxy Voters and removals, etc. Without such records an election is fought in the dark. The machine flounders in a sea of temporary enthusiasm with no guide except hope.

Who ever heard of a general going into battle, expecting to win, without knowing the strength of his army, his support, and if possible, the strength or weakness of his opposition?

## Get to Work—Now

The Assistant National Agent, in the December issue of the *Labour Organiser*, stressed the point that 'Those tackling the real job of creating an election machine now, were laying the foundation for future success'.

This foundation must be laid now—next week, next month will be too late. To attempt compiling correct records during the period of an election is futile. To hope to compile and use them effectively in that period is to live in a fool's paradise.

Numerous articles have been written to stress the vital importance of canvassing, but we have had very few suggesting how we can stimulate interest in what is sometimes a tedious job for some party workers.

While our opponents have the advantage of being able to employ, we have to rely on attracting sufficient volunteers between elections to undertake the canvass.

In Exeter we recently commenced our first of two canvasses—the Record Canvass, combined with a membership drive, and the problem of obtaining sufficient workers was one I had to face.

Why do we get this persistent lack of enthusiasm for canvassing? If we knew all the answers, I am sure we should be well on the way to winning a lot more seats. The appointment of a special officer to take charge is a help, but it does not get at the real core of our trouble.

Searching through my own early experiences of canvassing, I remember that when setting out with my register of the street, a notebook, a couple of pencils, and numerous verbal instructions, too many to remember, there was one thing lacking. I

This is an article of more than special interest and value to all Agents. There has long been a need for a handy, compact method by which canvassers can compile accurate, detailed information as they go from door to door, having with them at the same time all the necessary information which voters are likely to ask regarding registration questions. This article describes in detail a novel method of filling this long-felt want in a way which should commend it to Agents everywhere.

had been told the job was important, but somehow I did not feel confident.

Was this lack of confidence due to a realisation of the importance of the job and an awareness of the lack of equipment to cope with it? I believe it was, and am sure that such an awareness contributes greatly to our canvassing difficulties.

An efficient business organisation does not send a representative "on the road" with a list of calls, a faulty memory of the product he is to sell, and an improvised order book. He is provided with a well-got-up brochure, containing all the information he is likely to need, technical details, illustrations, etc., and facilities to meet any demand a customer is likely to make on him.

He can feel confident, he is well equipped, and has all the information with him.

## But The Cost?

The first point that will arise in some minds is the cost. How can we be expected to follow the example of a wealthy business organisation? Surely this is a question of the right sense of values.

A correct and complete set of records is the most valuable asset any party can possess. They are vital to its progress, and are the foundation of any success the party is likely to achieve in either local or national elections. Therefore, any cost they incur should be the first charge on any available finances. Newspapers, propaganda sheets, loudspeakers, etc., must take second place when it comes to a question of choice.

This fact I stressed to my Committee, obtaining their unanimous support. As a result I have been able to prepare a 32-page booklet, containing most of the information a canvasser will need on the doorstep, and facilities for compiling records.

Page 1. A personal word of thanks to the canvasser, and an index of the pages.

Page 2. 'Points to remember.' All the old ones—plus.

Pages 3, 4, 5, 6. 'Who can vote by post,' and 'Who can vote by proxy,' with details of provisions made, and the letter and number of card or form required in each case.

Pages 7, 8. Provision for entering register number, name and address, ward and polling district, and reason elector requires a postal vote.

Pages 9 to 22. Ruled pages for register to be pasted in. The streets are in geographical order and each book constitutes a district. Approximately ten districts to a ward. These pages can be fixed so that when a new register is issued, the old ones can be taken out. I appreciate that during an election, it is desirable to have most streets on separate cards, but for this record canvass a pair of canvassers will cover a district containing a number of streets.

Pages 23 to 26. Details of removals.

Pages 27 and 28. List of persons for next register, with a particular note on 'A person whose 21st birthday is after 21st Nov., etc.'

Pages 29 and 30. List of persons *considering* joining the Party. You will remember I mentioned we were combining the canvass with a membership drive.

Pages 31 and 32. Houses not yet on the register. Applicable mainly to new estates.

I think you will agree that the booklet covers a great deal of ground, and provides a wealth of information. From them, we are compiling our records at the central office, and the wards are writing up their 'promise' and 'doubtful' cards, etc., ready for the next local or general election.

Books can be supplied at 2s. each, or with a different type of cover at 1s. 6d. Since the first issue I have made one or two improvements which will be incorporated in any future issue. Should they be of any assistance to you, please write and I will gladly send on any further information.

## Union Notes

By L. H. M. HILLIARD

LONDON DISTRICT'S MOTION at our Annual Conference has set the Executive a 'teaser': 'Calling as it did for a complete survey including new categories of membership in line with present needs it leaves room for some original thinking. To get down to the job a small sub-committee has been established and they will be giving the whole matter serious consideration with some background facts presented by the General Secretary to help them reach conclusions. Coming under review, necessarily, will be 'part-time' and 'associate' membership, a subject on which there is likely to be considerable conflict of opinion when the Committee's report reaches the districts. Euan Carr tells us that Yorkshire is opposed to any extension of membership beyond what is now provided by rule so that division will certainly exist and next year's conference will be the livelier in consequence.'

### Our Badge

Orders have now been placed for the Union's own badge, authority for which was given by Annual Conference. It will sell at 1s. 6d. and will be produced in either stud or brooch pattern. The design is based upon the Labour Party insignia but the badge is much smaller and neater, and is pierced so that the central motif is 'lifted' from the background. It will carry the initials N.U.L.O.E.A. since the full title would produce a headache for the die makers. Supplies will be available soon and I shall be happy to forward them to members who express a desire to have them.

### Change of Officership

Once again the Executive Committee has observed the usual practice and last year's Vice-Chairman, Harold Nash, has become our new Chairman. Harold will be a worthy successor to Dai Cousins who has had a longer term of office than usual. Vic Butler was elected Vice-Chairman and the usual vote of thanks to the retiring Chairman was recorded.

# More Co-operation Please

By FRED PHILLIPS, Agent, Bridgwater C.L.P.

THE ABSENT VOTER who has removed to another part of the country is a continual headache to agents everywhere and the importance of keeping a check of Postal Votes on a changing Register cannot be over-emphasised.

It is in most cases hopeless to find where people have gone, thereby causing us the loss of many thousands of votes at every election. I would like to suggest that the problem could be solved easily with some measure of co-operation. In order to illustrate my message clearly, I will use the medium of imaginary conversations.

Bridgwater, 35 North Street. Our Canvasser rings the bell and a young woman answers.

Canvasser: 'Good evening. I am calling on behalf of the Bridgwater Labour Party and would like to have a word with Mr. and Mrs. Jones.'

Young woman: 'I am sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Jones do not live here now. They moved away about two months ago. I am Mrs. Phillips.'

Canvasser: 'Have you any idea where Mr. and Mrs. Jones have gone?'

Mrs. Phillips: 'As far as I know they have gone up North, but I can't tell you exactly where.'

At this point most canvassers will bid Mrs. Phillips a good-night and leave it at that. Should an election come before the next Register is published two Labour Votes would be lost for Bridgwater. Here Agents can help, by instructing their Canvassers to carry on the conversation thus:

Canvasser: 'May I ask where you have come from?'

Mrs. Phillips: 'From London.'

Canvasser: 'I take it that you are a supporter of the Labour Government?'

Mrs. Phillips: 'Oh yes. My husband and I always vote Labour.'

Canvasser: 'In that case, have you made application to be treated as an Absent Voter, so that you may vote by post in the next election?'

Mrs. Phillips: 'My husband may have done, but I don't think so.'

Here our canvasser hands over to Mrs. Phillips two cards, which can be obtained from Transport House, to make a claim to be treated as Absent Voters. The canvasser can either have the forms filled in

at once or call back for them the next day. The forms are handed to the Agent, who will forward them either to the Agent in the London Constituency concerned or send them to the Town Hall of the Borough in London where Mr. and Mrs. Phillips have come from.

London, Bethnal Green, 24 Museum Buildings. Our Canvasser rings the bell. A middle-aged man answers.

Canvasser: 'Good evening. I am calling on behalf of the Bethnal Green Labour Party and would like to have a word with Mr. and Mrs. Phillips.'

Middle-aged man: 'I am sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Phillips do not live here now. They moved away a few weeks ago. I am Mr. Miller.'

Canvasser: 'Have you any idea where Mr. and Mrs. Phillips have gone?'

Mr. Miller: 'As far as I know they have gone to Somerset, but I can't say exactly where.'

Canvasser: 'May I ask where you have come from?'

Mr. Miller: 'From Barnsley.'

Canvasser: 'May I ask whether you are a supporter of the Labour Government?'

Mr. Miller: 'My wife and I certainly are.'

Canvasser: 'In that case, have you made application to be treated as an Absent Voter, so that you may vote by post in the next election?'

Mr. Miller: 'I haven't thought about that.'

Canvasser hands over two forms, gets them filled in and sends them on to Barnsley through his agent.

In Barnsley a canvasser contacts Mr. and Mrs. Jones (from Bridgwater), gets them to complete forms and sends them on to the Bridgwater agent.

Six Labour votes saved. That is what I mean by co-operation. It may not work so easily in practice, but the principle is the same.

One final word about co-operation in regard to members. If a member moves to another town to which he has gone, advising him that member 'X' is now living in his Constituency.

A member lost in one Constituency through removal must be a gain to his new Constituency.

# Questions and Answers

Compiled by PAT CAVANAUGH, National Agent's Department

## VOTING AT PARLIAMENTARY SELECTION CONFERENCES

**Q.** Should the vote at a parliamentary selection conference be by ballot or by show of hands? Should subsequent votes be taken until one candidate secures an overall majority?

**A.** The model rules laid down by Annual Conference state specifically that the selection of a parliamentary candidate shall be by ballot vote. Where there are three or more nominees, none of whom secure more than 50 per cent. of the total votes, a second or third ballot should be taken. The nominee at the bottom of the ballot being eliminated progressively before proceeding to the next vote.

## MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS FROM O.A.P.s

**Q.** Are we permitted to accept Old Age Pensioners into membership at reduced subscriptions?

**A.** Yes. Section 5, Clause X of the Party Constitution as amended by the 1950 Conference now reads: "Each individual member of the party shall pay a minimum membership fee of 6d. monthly . . . except Old Age Pensioners who have retired from work and they shall be allowed individual membership of the party on the minimum payment of 1s. per annum".

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS, 1951

**Q.** Can you tell me the dates of Local Government Elections in 1951.

**A.** England and Wales

Boroughs: Thursday, 10th May.

Urban and Rural Districts: Friday, 4th May to Thursday 10th May. (Actual day fixed by County Council after consultation with the District Council.)

Scotland

Town Councils: Tuesday, 8th May.

## POLLING STATION IN CHAPEL

**Q.** We have suggested to our R.O. that a certain chapel in one of the Wards would be more accessible than the present polling station and he has replied that this cannot be used for local government elections. Is this so?

**A.** The best way to answer your query is to quote in full the relevant section of the Act which reads as follows: 'An election shall not be held in a church, chapel or other place of public worship.' (L.G.A. 1933, Second Schedule, Part III, Para. 5.)

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE—STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

**Q.** Who appoints the Standing Orders Committee at the Labour Party Annual Conference?

**A.** Although generally known as the Standing Orders Committee the proper term for the Committee referred to is the Conference Arrangements Committee and consists of five delegates, together with a member of Head Office Staff who acts as Secretary to the Committee. The five delegates are elected for the succeeding year at each Annual Conference, and its business is to arrange the order of the Party Conference Agenda, to act as a Standing Orders Committee. Every affiliated organisation is entitled to nominate one delegate for the Conference Arrangements Committee.

## METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCILS—RETIREMENT

**Q.** Is it correct that Metropolitan Borough Councillors are not due to retire until 1953; that is, four years after their election?

**A.** Yes, but it is only a special measure introduced for this particular period. Its purpose is to avoid future L.C.C. and M.B.C. elections taking place in the same year. The Metropolitan Boroughs are of course, all in London.

# Get On Your Perch— Labour Candidates

By E. S. D. Bishop, Prospective Candidate, Exeter

*He who whispers down a well  
About the goods he has to sell  
Will never get the shining dollars  
Like he who climbs his perch and hollers.*

I AM NOT SURE whether the words given above are quoted correctly, but I am certain they contain sound advice, which, with a bit of effort can spell success for many more Labour Candidates.

To be effective, publicity must be organised. In large towns and cities—and particularly places with several constituencies—there must be co-ordination of publicity and common policy on which to fight local elections.

## Local Specialists

A few years ago the representatives of the three wings of the Bristol Labour Movement set up what is called the Research and Publicity Committee. The committee, formed of local people, expert or specialising in all spheres of local interest, gives advice to the Borough Labour Party on centralised publicity, and carries out research useful to Labour candidates and election workers.

The committee is mainly concerned with municipal elections (or Parliamentary by-elections) and exists to give advice on anything appertaining to the conduct of an election campaign. Services offered by the committee include a central reference library at the central premises, containing a wide selection of books, pamphlets and official documents useful to candidates and others seeking facts and figures. A press cutting service is also available.

Prior to local elections taking place the committee meets and discusses the campaign. What are the main issues? What line or stunts are the opposition likely to pursue? What should be included in the Labour Party's manifesto to the electorate?

In the making up of the policy statement a Policy Sub-Committee considers all these matters with the record and objects of various Council Committees, and the needs of the local people. A statement is prepared, submitted to a meeting of members of the local constituency parties and other affiliated organisations, and, when

accepted, becomes the policy on which the election is fought.

This policy statement may later be incorporated in a centrally printed election address, which, while cutting costs, leaves ample space for candidates to add their own personal message and, any other relevant matter.

The committee discusses the strategy of the campaign. What concentrated help from the constituencies and affiliated organisations can be sent to help in marginal Labour or Tory wards? On what issues should there be concentrated publicity? What stunts are the Tories likely to think of next?

Again recommendations are made to the Borough Labour Party and advice offered.

Members of the City Council seeking re-election have a good knowledge and experience of Council committee work. But what about the new candidates who have no council experience and less than a practical knowledge of matters involved? How will they face questioners? Here, help is given by a duplicated set of speakers' notes covering all important aspects of council work including housing, health, education and finance.

The notes are without 'padding', as brief and informative as possible, and compiled with the assistance of Labour chairmen of council committees, other members, and outside specialists.

## Election Specials

Another job is the editing of an Election Special which, with very brief and interesting bits and pieces puts Labour's case and answers Tory lies. The layout of the last election special issued locally was based on that of a very readable national newspaper which daily uses the kind of pictures which a Labour paper would like, but can find little reason to use! Last-minute compilation and issue provides an effective answer to any similar 'special' the Tories care to publish.

Experience proves that publicity used between elections can be more effective than anything done immediately before polling day. Leaflets dropped in the letterbox six months before always have more punch because they are not accompanied by opposition literature.

And what about the local newspapers? Is the lack of Labour Party publicity really due to hostility on the part of the editor, or to the apathy on the part of the local Labour Movement which may not take the trouble to send in the news? Though editors may not be sympathetic, they may be willing to meet the demands of a large number of Labour readers of their newspapers. The Tories never hesitate to inform the world of their activities and even tell us about their whist drives (often naming the booby prize winner). Such items, although not of importance, at least let readers know there is a local Tory Party and that they do something! Here is a job for a Press Officer in wards and constituencies.

#### Letters To The Editor

Then there are those 'Letters to the Editor'. Do you let the local Tories dominate the column into one of groans about the way things are going, without a reply from the thousands of local Labour men and women? And why wait to reply, when there's a chance to attack?

There are many other things one could say, but as Tories doubtless read the *Labour Organiser* to get some good advice and a few of our secrets, if possible, it is about time every local party really began to think about publicity for itself.

So get on your perch Labour Party workers, and let the world know that despite the difficulties it's good to be alive under a Labour administration!

Might I end by pointing out that should Local or Constituency Parties be interested in this Bristol scheme, then I would be delighted to let them have any further information on request.

## COMPLIMENTS!

*Two visitors from U.S.A. joined, as observers, a canvassing team which went into the Drayton Ward of Ealing recently, when 50 new members were enrolled in two hours.*

*This is what they had to say after their experience:*

*'As visitors from America, we have been particularly interested in seeing the Labour Party in action.*

*From the other side of the Atlantic we have admired the achievements of the Labour Government in showing that democratic Socialism does work, in the face of the dire predictions of its enemies. But there was always a mystery about it for us; how did a party proposing such fundamental changes in the economic system even manage to win an election against the financially and socially powerful opposition it had to face?*

*This is why we were so interested to learn from first-hand experience how the party is organised on the local level. The thing that has impressed us most so far is the great enthusiasm of all the Labour Party members we have met, together with their confidence that they are doing important work and helping to make England a better place in which to live.*

*We are grateful to the Ealing Labour Party for giving us this chance to see for ourselves how the Labour Party works.'*



## MORTONS FOR STATIONERY

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# Individual Membership Retained in 1950

By A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**I**F INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP, retained and increased, is a sign of strength, then the Labour Party, as this round-up will show, is in a more than happy state.

The report of the 49th Annual Conference of the Party showed that Lanark had the highest individual membership in the country and information reaching us from Mr. S. Fraser, brother of the Under Secretary of State for Scotland, Tom Fraser, the Agent in that constituency, shows that this position of strength was retained in 1950.

## In The Highlands

While in Scotland it is interesting to note that in Argyllshire, the second largest constituency in the United Kingdom, Party strength and enthusiasm is increasing to such an extent that the Constituency Party there has now decided to appoint a full-time Agent.

It is not giving away any secrets to point out that three, even two years ago, the staunchest Labour Party member in that far-flung, scattered constituency would not have considered for a moment the worthwhileness of appointing even a part-time Agent.

Down south again, to Lewisham South, which in 1949 ran a close second to Lanark in individual membership.

Mrs. Raisin, full-time Agent in Lewisham, has a story to tell concerning membership in her constituency during 1950, which makes good reading.

From 5,420 in 1949 membership at the end of 1950 had leapt to over 7,000, a step-up during the year of some 1,600 individual members.

During the year total subscriptions gathered by 24 collectors who, by the way retain 33 1/3rd per cent on all collections, amounted to £1,451, or an average of some 48. 1/2d. per member, which Mrs. Raisin reckons must be about the highest in the country.

This increase in membership was made despite the fact that some 800 members were lost to the Party by removals, etc.

Intensive membership drives carried on during May, June, July and September were, in the main, responsible for the increase, and Mrs. Raisin points to rising membership even in Tory dominated wards. In one particular ward where the

Labour vote at the General Election was 1,850, some 500 members have been enrolled into the Party, and in the biggest Tory ward 32.64 of the Labour vote has been enrolled.

Similarly at Bexley, which does not now have the advantage of a full-time Agent, the secretary, Mr. Swallow, reports continuing strength during 1950. At the end of 1949 individual membership totalled 4,500 and at the end of 1950 individual contributions to the funds of that Party had increased by 2 1/2 per cent.

Similarly at Bermondsey where in 1949 there were 4,684 members, Mr. Thomas, the Agent, reports a maintaining of that strength.

He adds that in some wards the target figure for new membership has been passed, adding a point which other Agents might well adopt. In Bermondsey workers are encouraged to go from one ward to another helping out in particularly sticky places.

Woolwich West with 4,865, and Woolwich East with 4,535, were also among the record breakers in 1949. Like so many other built up constituencies they too are suffering from heavy removals as more and more people move out into new housing estates.

During 1950, however, both Mr. Knight, who is Agent at Woolwich West and Secretary of the Party, and Mr. Keys, Agent at Woolwich East and Assistant Secretary of the Party, report 1,300 new members in the area, a total which goes a long way to offset losses by removal.

Heartening in Woolwich, despite the losses incurred during the year, is the fact that subscriptions for 1950 are up some £270 on the 1949 total, making a total of £1,900 for the year.

Here an intensive springtime membership drive is anticipated, which it is believed will more than offset all losses.

## Confident Expectations

Briefly then that is the state at the beginning of 1951 of the larger Parties in the country. Like conditions prevail all over the country and even at this early date in 1951 it is confidently expected that by the end of the year membership subscriptions will have soared still higher taking the Party both locally and nationally to even greater heights of strength.

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